

Amendments to the Specification

Please replace the paragraph at page 8, lines 19-30 through page 9, lines 1-2 with the following amended paragraph:

Upon receiving a request to forward the data packet, the NIC device driver 142 (Fig. 1) requests that the NIC transmit the data packet over the selected physical link 122-0, . . . ,122-4. In one embodiment, the physical link 122-0, . . . ,122-3 is selected by performing an eXclusive OR ("XOR") operation on a number of bits of the source and destination MAC addresses. The result of the XOR operation selects one of the physical links 122-0, . . . ,122-3. The number of bits of the source and destination MAC addresses, selected for performing the XOR operation is dependent on the number of physical links 122-0, . . . ,122-3 in the trunk 124-0. For example, for the four physical links 122-0, . . . ,122-3 in trunk 124-0, the XOR operation is performed on two bits of the source and destination MAC addresses. If the selected physical link 122-0, . . . , 122-3 is not available, one of the other physical links 122-0, . . . ,122-3 is selected. For example, the other physical link can be the next sequential physical link 122-0, . . . 122-3 or the first physical link ~~[[120]]~~122-0, . . . ,122-3 in the trunk 124-0.